



Arden College

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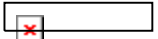
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Basic information about the college



Name of college: Arden College

Type of college: Independent specialist residential college

Principal: Christopher Mayho

Address of college: 40 Derby Road, Southport, Merseyside PR9 0TZ

Telephone number: 01704 534433

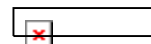
Fax number: 01704 549711

Executive director of parent company: George Blackoe

Unique reference number: 131935

Name of reporting inspector: Joyce Deere ALI

Dates of inspection: 10-14 May 2002



Information about the college

Arden College is an independent, residential specialist college that provides further education for students aged 16 to 25 years who have learning difficulties and/or social, behavioural or emotional difficulties. The college was originally known as Paduan College. Since 1998, the college has had two changes of ownership, and is now known as Arden College. It is owned by Craegmore Healthcare Company Limited, under the auspices of Speciality Care (Rest Homes) Ltd. In February 2001, a new manager was brought in, following issues raised by the Further Education Funding Council about the college's capacity to meet the needs of the client group, many of whom had severe challenging behaviours. The new manager has refocused the college and implemented a major restructuring programme.

The main teaching accommodation is on one site, and the college makes substantial use of the residential homes for teaching. Students are all accommodated within two miles of the college. Many travel independently to college. The college recruits nationally. It no longer accepts students with severe challenging behaviours, and only five students currently come into this category. The college does not currently provide residential accommodation for students who use wheelchairs, although there are two day students who come into this category. There are 31 residential students and ten day students. Some 67% of students are aged 19 years and above. The college's intake includes students who have Down's syndrome, autistic spectrum disorder, epilepsy, speech and communication difficulties, severe learning difficulties and a range of conditions such as chromosomal depletion and Fallot's tetralogy.

The primary aim of the college is 'to provide our students with an inclusive quality educational and social care provision that enables them to achieve their full potential and supports their social, behavioural and emotional development'.

The college has recently adopted a life-skills focused programme and introduced the 'essential skills' award across the college. The students no longer focus on subjects for accreditation. The exceptions to this are the two vocational options: catering and horticulture. Where appropriate, students can take National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) units in catering and horticulture. There are 18 students on catering courses and ten on the horticulture course. Four students attend the local further education college for literacy and numeracy for one or more sessions a week.

How effective is the college?

Inspectors judged the quality of provision to be satisfactory overall. Vocational studies and social and life skills are satisfactory, but literacy and numeracy is unsatisfactory. The standard of residential provision is high and students are well cared for and supported.

Key strengths

- good teaching of practical subjects
- effective leadership during restructuring

- high standard of residential provision
- good internal communications
- effective use of the local community to develop learning
- good behaviour management
- good standard of support and guidance for students
- effective information technology strategy
- good attention to health and safety
- good financial management.

What should be improved?

- the literacy and numeracy provision
- the curriculum framework
- the rigour of target-setting, monitoring and recording
- contribution from specialists

- the underdeveloped strategic planning
- the quality assurance arrangements
- the inadequate baseline assessment process
- the preparation for transition
- the promotion of equal opportunities.

Further aspects of provision requiring improvement are identified in sections on individual subjects and courses in the full report.

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning, and how well students achieve. All courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum areas and on the effectiveness of leadership and management in the range: outstanding (grade 1), good (2), satisfactory (3), unsatisfactory (4), and very weak (5).

Area	Overall judgements about provision and comment
Vocational studies: catering and horticulture	Satisfactory. Achievements of NVQ units in catering are good and there are high standards of practical work. Most teaching in catering is outstanding or very good, and in horticulture it is satisfactory. In horticulture, not all staff have adequate specialist knowledge about teaching the students. The range of vocational options in the college is narrow, and there are insufficient work experience opportunities.
Social and life skills: communication, art, drama, music, craft, healthy living, leisure and life skills	Satisfactory. High standards of work are produced in practical sessions and good use is made of realistic contexts to reinforce learning. Student behaviour is well managed and students are effectively supported through the tutorial process. There are inadequate resources for students with complex communication difficulties and for day students. Individual targets are insufficiently specific and assessment outcomes are not used to develop individual learning plans.
Literacy and numeracy	Unsatisfactory. The initial assessments and recording of achievements are unsatisfactory, and there is poor co-ordination of teaching of literacy and numeracy across the extended curriculum. Most teaching is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient expertise in teaching literacy and numeracy across the college. There is effective integration of literacy and numeracy in catering, art and music.

How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are satisfactory. There has been effective leadership through a recent process of restructuring, and staff feel fully informed and involved in the changes. Financial management is good. There are adequate levels of staffing for the students, although there is insufficient specialist expertise to meet the needs of the small minority of students with complex communication needs. The college offers satisfactory value for money. Day-to-day management of the college is effective and there is good attention paid to the health and safety of students. Residential accommodation is of a high standard, and the directors monitor this rigorously. The strategic planning and quality assurance processes need further development and there is insufficient promotion of equal opportunities. The curriculum framework is new and needs further development. The directors have insufficient oversight of the curriculum.

To what extent is the provision of the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. It attracts students from across the country. It provides for students with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and it meets the needs of these students adequately overall. However, there are a few students with complex communication difficulties whose needs are not being met fully. The college responds effectively to any instances of bullying or harassment. The college does not promote all aspects of equal opportunities effectively throughout the college. It respects students' wishes in terms of single sex accommodation, but there is insufficient emphasis in the curriculum on self-advocacy and issues relating to race and gender. There are 14 female students and 27 male. There are currently three students from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are two day students who use wheelchairs and can access the main building. Residential accommodation has not been adapted for ramped access.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Support and guidance are good overall. Students are well supported in their lessons and in the residential homes. The standard of care and behaviour plans is high, and all students have risk rigorous assessments. Staff are well informed about individual students and of specific interventions needed. Behaviour management is good and students feel safe at the college. Key workers and personal tutors work well together to provide personal support and oversee individual progress. The induction programme is effective, although it needs more specialist contribution. The baseline assessment is not adequate. Careers advice is not sufficient, and the preparation for students' transition on leaving the college is underdeveloped.

Students' view of the college

Students' views about the college were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below:

What students like about the college

- the enrichment programme
- working in Café Arden
- the dining room
- the staff

- opportunities to get dressed up for the weekly disco
- using computers.

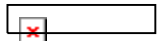
What they feel could be improved

- the opportunity for work experience
- more cupboards in the home
- the quality of some food.

Other information

The college has two months to prepare an action plan in response to the report. It must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors must agree the plan and send copies of it to the Learning and Skills Council and the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching - all age groups	48%	30%	22%
Learning - all age groups	44%	34%	22%

Satisfactory (Grade 4), Unsatisfactory (Grade 5), Poor (Grade 6) and Very Poor (Grade 7).

Achievement and standards

1. Retention rates are satisfactory, and at 95% are in line with those of other specialist residential colleges. Pass rates on units of NVQs are good on catering courses, although very few students have achieved the full award. Unit pass rates on horticulture have been good since their re-introduction in the current year, although they were poorly recorded previously. The college has not yet developed a system for recording and comparing student cohorts on non-accredited courses. The college demonstrates progress by recording students' termly completion of individual targets. However, each target has a different weighting, and the criteria for success are not always clear. The college is not able to make comparisons over time in relation to the achievement of targets. The college's recording systems are not well developed and it does not yet have sufficient data to demonstrate added value on an individual, annual or cohort basis.

2. There are high standards of practical work on vocational courses, and in art and music, and movement lessons. In catering, students demonstrate good skills in food preparation and food service when working with members of the public.

3. Students make good progress in meeting the behaviour targets on their individual behaviour plans. In catering, music and art lessons, students also make demonstrable progress in improving their literacy and numeracy skills and understanding. However, there is little progress made by students in improving their literacy and numeracy skills across the college as a whole. The 'essential skills' targets, which have been introduced in the current academic year, are sometimes imprecise, or inappropriately expressed, and progress is not measured accurately.

4. Students' progression to further training or to the community has not been good. In 2001, only some 50% of students were recorded as having progressed to further training. However, the planned destinations for the current cohort of leavers show considerable improvement. Most will be involved in some further educational or employment related activity.

Quality of education and learning

5. The overall standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory, although they are unsatisfactory in literacy and numeracy provision, where 55% of lessons were judged to be less than satisfactory. On vocational programmes, 75% of teaching was good or better, with some outstanding work. In this area, the teachers worked well to meet the NVQ requirements, as well as the individual targets in students' behaviour and individual learning plans. The realistic work environment is used to develop skills in a planned way. Students are encouraged to discuss and evaluate their progress at the end of lessons, and many are able to do this with confidence. Some very good and outstanding teaching was also seen in art, and in music and movement, where teachers were able to use the activities to teach students how to improve their skills, as well as meet identified targets where appropriate. Throughout the provision, behaviour management, particularly of those students with the highest level of need, was skilful, and staff followed the guidance effectively.

6. In the less successful lessons, there was very little learning. Some tasks were not linked to individual needs. Some were too easy for students. There was insufficient specific teaching of skills that students needed to complete tasks or targets. There was some confusion between long-term and short-term goals. 'Essential skills' targets were often focused on remedying deficits, starting with 'not to'; for example, 'not to go near glass when agitated'. This type of target setting contradicts the positive behaviour management strategies identified in each student's behaviour plan. There was insufficient emphasis on building on students' strengths. Individual targets were often displayed in lessons for all students to see. There is no guidance for staff about respecting students' dignity and privacy when developing and monitoring targets that relate to students' inappropriate personal habits and behaviours.

7. The residential accommodation is of a very high standard. The parent company is rigorous in monitoring the care standards and maintaining the buildings. The teaching accommodation is

satisfactory. Some of the teaching rooms are very small, but the practical facilities for the arts are good. The dining room is attractive and liked by students. The facilities for teaching in the houses are good. Café Arden, the college's café in the centre of the town, is attractive and a major asset of the college. However, there is no wheelchair access to the top floor where some teaching on health and beauty takes place. The main teaching block is accessible for wheelchair users. The residential houses are not fully wheelchair accessible, though there are immediate plans to make one of the larger residential homes wheelchair accessible. There is good attention to health and safety throughout the accommodation.

8. Teaching resources are satisfactory, although in literacy and numeracy they are not always adult focused. The college has successfully implemented a strategy to provide more computer facilities for students. This includes some adaptations for students. Students make good use of the computers in teaching and in the houses. There are not sufficient technical communication aids to assist students with complex language needs.

9. Many teachers have teaching qualifications, but not all have specialist qualifications. The literacy and numeracy qualifications held by staff are elementary and are not sufficient. The college has plans to address this deficiency. Students benefit from the support of specialist staff - a physiotherapist, psychologist and speech and language therapist. However, there is currently insufficient expertise to provide adequate initial assessments and guidance for students with more complex communication needs. All care staff have, or are working towards, NVQ qualifications in care.

10. The processes for initial and baseline assessment are not satisfactory. Although the initial assessment takes place over a week, there is insufficient specialist input for students with more complex needs. Little account is taken of the strengths that students bring. The baseline assessment process, which takes place during the students' first few weeks in the college, does not always build on the initial assessment. For example, one student was assessed initially as being able to tell the time, but had targets in telling the time on her individual learning plan. The process for arriving at the individual targets rightly includes the personal tutor and the house manager, but there is insufficient rigour in defining the targets, and there are contradictions in the approaches used. The process for assessing the achievement of 'essential skills' targets is based on counting successes observed by staff. It is not clear what criteria are used to assess the completion of targets. In some cases staff merely ticked a box, with insufficient evidence of actual achievement by students.

11. The assessment processes for the NVQ units are rigorous, with evidence drawn from a range of sources. The verifier reports are positive and recommendations are acted upon.

12. Students have access to a range of enrichment activities across the extended curriculum, which promotes their personal development and enhances their life experiences. These include activities in the local community and within the college. For example, students attend a disco every week run by a local charity for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The houses are used effectively to teach skills of independent living.

13. Overall, the curriculum framework needs further development. Too little account is taken of students' prior attainment when planning programmes and courses for them, resulting in missed opportunities for progression and the consolidation of knowledge and skills. Students all follow the same programme, although there may be some individual differences in the amounts of time spent on each activity. The decision to base the curriculum on the 'essential skills' award is not appropriate for all students, some of whom would benefit from achieving recognition in subjects that might be of value when they leave the college. The range of vocational options is narrow, with students offered either horticulture or catering. There are shortcomings in the provision for day students, with a limited range of activities to support the transference of skills learnt in lessons into other social and group situations. The length of the college day is the same for all students; it is too short for some and planning does not take account of the range of disability within the college.

14. Support and guidance for students at Arden College are good overall. There is a very positive environment throughout the college; students are happy and well motivated in their education and

leisure activities. Thorough and supportive behaviour management strategies promote effective learning. There is good support for students on personal issues through the tutorial programme, where key workers and tutors work together to support students. Specialist counselling is available where appropriate.

15. Access to appropriate specialist careers education and guidance, and support from the Connexions service consists of attendance at or invitation to annual reviews for students, which is barely adequate. The co-ordination of transition arrangements for students is unsatisfactory, with no overall programme to address issues relating to transition to further educational provision or to prepare students for employment. Some of the vocational courses provide students with opportunities for supported work experience. For example, the catering team organises realistic work activities in food preparation and service in both the college dining room and in Café Arden. However, there are insufficient opportunities for students to experience supported or independent work experience in the local community.

16. The additional support provided by the specialist staff is good overall. Staff take account of the recommendations in the behaviour plans. The care plans are good and risk assessments are rigorous. Managers ensure that all staff are fully conversant with individual need and the involvement of other specialists and agencies. For example, a visiting physiotherapist attends some students in their homes and designs exercises that are completed by the staff in the residences. These are recorded in the communication diary for update information and monitored through targets in the care section of the individual learning plan. Issues relating to race and gender are not promoted sufficiently, either through the curriculum or the residential programme.

17. Arrangements for the induction of new students are satisfactory. The college uses information communications technology and appropriate communication aids, for example picture aids, to augment and assist access to information. The one-week induction visit is well structured. It is supportive for students, who are often leaving home for the first time. Whilst most residential homes have regular student meetings to plan activities, there is no student council and students are not fully involved in developments within the college.

Leadership and management

18. Leadership and management of the college and the residential provision are satisfactory. Following a period of considerable restructuring, the principal, under new management, has successfully refocused the college, with redesigned aims and values and different admissions criteria. The college does not now admit students with a profile of predominantly challenging behaviours. Staff are very positive about the changed direction of the college and its leadership, and morale is good. All staff are committed to the future development of the college and are eager to learn and further their own professional development.

19. Operational management is effective, with senior staff working well together. Residential provision is well managed and the staff know the students well. The curriculum needs further development following the re-positioning of the college. More planning is needed to ensure the provision meets the vocational needs of students. A small number of students' schedule and purchase orders have not been changed to reflect the fact that students are no longer taking the accredited programmes originally agreed.

20. Strategic management is underdeveloped. Staff discuss issues through a series of well-documented meetings. Senior managers draw up a college self-assessment plan, and strategic and development plans. However, these documents are vague, lack rigour and do not support the improvement of the provision or focus sufficiently on the achievement of students. Information relating to attendance and punctuality is regularly recorded and analysed for individual students, but little emphasis is given to overall targets for retention, achievement and attainment.

21. The college has begun a programme of lesson observation with some external contribution from specialists. It has recently introduced peer observation activities to share good practice. However, these activities are isolated and do not form part of an overall quality framework. Supervision for

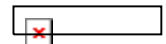
residential staff is in place as required by the care standards, although no evaluation of the process has been completed. Teaching staff have regular supervision, linked to the training programme. The college invests well in staff training, but the emphasis has been on meeting external requirements rather than the immediate needs of the teaching staff. Recent developments in staff appraisal include an updating of policy. All managers have been trained in the revised arrangements, which are being introduced this term.

22. The open communication policy with all staff and students ensures effective sharing of the values and principles of the college. Staff are particularly successful in responding to oppressive behaviours and bullying. Incidents are well identified and recorded, and the figures show that there has been a reduction in the number of incidents during the last academic year. Complaints are responded to appropriately.

23. The regular monthly monitoring visits to the college by the regional manager, and the contact by directors of the company are supportive in the upgrading and development of the provision. They are rigorous in the review and development of residential houses. Directors receive copies of all relevant information. However, there is no process for the review and evaluation of education provision by the directors.

24. Financial management of the college is good with sound procedures, policies and practice established by the parent company. Staff are clear about the procedures for budget management and receive regular financial updates. The directors of the company have invested in the college accommodation over the last two years with plans for further developments in the coming year. Overall, the college provides satisfactory value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Vocational studies: catering and horticulture

Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (Grade 3)**

Strengths

- good leadership and management of catering
- good teaching in catering
- good achievement on vocational programmes
- good behaviour management.

Weaknesses

- insufficient work experience
- narrow range of vocational programmes
- insufficient specialist resources and staff expertise in horticulture.

Scope of provision

25. The college offers pre-vocational and accredited programmes in catering and horticulture. Courses in food preparation and cooking are provided at NVQ levels 1 and 2. Amenity horticulture is provided at NVQ level 1. There are 18 students taking catering and ten taking horticulture. The inspection covered all aspects of catering and horticulture, including vocational skills, and also covered lessons in the residential homes and at Café Arden, the college's café in the town centre.

Achievement and standards

26. On catering courses, students achieve well and meet challenging individual targets, which are successfully integrated into the vocational curriculum. Students are able to evaluate their achievement and discuss their performance. On catering courses, NVQ targets are achieved using a wide range of evidence from a variety of settings. Students achieve NVQ units in catering at rates appropriate for their levels of ability and, in many cases, exceed expectations. Students' achievements are less good in horticulture.

27. Vocational skills are developed in realistic work environments. Students demonstrate high standards of food preparation and service, and relate well to customers. They develop skills that promote independent working and appropriate social interaction, which equip them well for adult life. Standards of work are satisfactory in horticulture. Students attend the vocational programmes regularly and are punctual.

Quality of education and training

28. Most teaching is good or better, and some is outstanding. In catering, the atmosphere is purposeful. Teachers have high expectations of students and establish a climate of mutual respect. Students are expected to take responsibility for achieving and recording their targets, which are rigorous. Teachers use the practical nature of the environment well. For example, they integrate literacy and numeracy into the lessons by teaching and reinforcing key concepts, such as time and measurement. Students are taught how to work with members of the public, developing their social and communication skills. In food preparation and service, staff and students work well as a team in order to meet the requirements of the diners. Good use is made of college work experience to reinforce students' understanding and knowledge. Students are encouraged to analyse and discuss their work, and to become evaluative and self-critical. Catering skills are effectively reinforced in the houses as part of the extended curriculum.

29. Teachers in horticulture have good subject knowledge and skills, and are developing the horticulture area effectively. However, teaching approaches are not always the most effective for the students. For example, although in some lessons the activities were appropriate, too often questions were closed and sometimes the vocabulary was too difficult. There was insufficient checking that students understood.

30. In both catering and horticulture lessons, there is thorough emphasis on health and safety

issues. Behaviour targets and strategies are based on the reward of positive behaviours, and behaviour management was effective in all lessons. Recording of achievements in lessons is good. Strategies used include the use of photographs, written work and observation of student activity.

31. Learning resources for catering are good. The use of Café Arden in the town and the students' involvement in the running of the college catering facilities provide excellent supported work experience opportunities. In horticulture, the large garden used is appropriate for the current programmes. However, more consideration is needed of the specific equipment available to meet the needs of learners of differing heights and physical abilities. Teachers in catering are well qualified, but in horticulture there has been a vacancy for a qualified teacher. The vacancy was filled three weeks before the inspection. Teachers in this area have had insufficient training in some of the teaching approaches required when working with students with learning difficulties.

32. Assessment and verification procedures on the NVQ programmes are effective. There have been difficulties with assessments in horticulture, but these are now resolved. Opportunities for assessment are taken from all aspects of students' work. Assessment strategies are well developed. However, the baseline assessment does not always build on the prior achievements of students. Too often, prior knowledge and experience are not used effectively as part of the planning for students. Although students are taught in realistic environments, there are insufficient work placements in the community for those students who may progress to some form of employment in these areas in the future. The college has identified this weakness.

33. The limited range of vocational programmes inhibits choice and progression. Catering and horticulture are not appropriate vocational options for all students. The decision to reduce vocational options affects some students adversely. The staff recognise this and are considering introducing more vocational options. Individual needs are identified, monitored and reviewed through the tutorial system. Staff are very supportive of students and there is very effective communication between tutors in college and the residences. There is little systematic careers guidance during students' programmes and transition arrangements are underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

34. The quality of leadership and management in catering is good. In catering, teachers and support workers plan well and they are encouraged by the manager to set appropriate targets that are achievable. The NVQ programme is well managed. Horticulture has a newly appointed manager. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of the appointment. Strategic and operational plans in the vocational area are underdeveloped. Staff have undertaken extensive health and safety, and behaviour management training, which has a positive impact on teaching and learning. Staff appraisal is in the early stages, but staff have supervision and their training needs are taken into account.

Social and life skills: communication, art, drama, music, craft, healthy living, leisure and life skills

Provision in this area is **satisfactory (Grade 3)**

Strengths

- good standard of work in practical sessions
- effective use of realistic contexts for learning
- good attention to health and safety issues

- effective management of challenging behaviours
- effective tutorial processes.

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped target setting
- insufficient challenge in a few lessons
- insufficient specialist resources
- insufficient connection between assessment and individual learning plans
- insufficiently developed process for tracking students' progress.

Scope of provision

35. The college offers a range of communication, social and life skills provision that is delivered both in the college and in the residential homes. The curriculum, which is based on the 'essential skills' award, includes communication, art, craft, drama, music, health and leisure, and life skills. Much teaching takes place in the residences or in the local community. Art courses take place in specialist resource rooms. The inspection covered the range of curriculum areas and took into account relevant lesson observations by other inspectors on the team.

Achievements and standards

36. Students attend regularly and punctually, and retention rates are satisfactory. The standards of work in the practical sessions are high. All learners have individual targets that are addressed across the curriculum. However, levels of students' success rates are difficult to determine because the targets are not always specific. Learners make good progress in developing personal and learning skills through access to community facilities.

Quality of education and training

37. Most teaching is satisfactory or good. Only one lesson observed was judged to be unsatisfactory. Practical sessions, such as art, and music and movement are very good. For example, in one art lesson, the students worked on a project to design and build their own model

boat to sail in the local marina. This enabled them to follow through the process from start to finish, successfully integrating literacy, numeracy and problem solving. Lessons are well structured with objectives set across the extended curriculum. Effective use is made of the local community and residential facilities to support and reinforce learning in realistic contexts. Students' challenging behaviours are well managed.

38. In the less successful lessons, students were insufficiently challenged and there were missed learning opportunities. For example, a student was asked to complete an editing task on the computer, which he did in a couple of minutes and was then bored. Insufficient note was taken of information on the individual learning plan. Staff know students well and are sensitive to individual needs. However, there is a lack of specialist knowledge and expertise about the needs of learners with more complex communication difficulties. For example, one teacher used an incorrect communication sign, the understanding of which formed the basis of the lesson. Resources for students with complex communication difficulties are inadequate. For example, there is no access to augmentative communication systems to facilitate and develop learners' skills. Attention to health and safety issues is thorough. There are comprehensive risk assessments for students in practical sessions, in work placements and in community activities.

39. Initial assessment is comprehensive, although not systematic, and the outcomes do not effectively inform students' individual learning plans. There were some contradictions between these findings. For example, an initial assessment specified that a student had no concept of time, yet a strength identified in the individual learning plan was 'can tell the time'. The processes of tracking students' achievements are insufficiently developed. Personal tutors and key workers meet weekly prior to the tutorial, where progress is monitored. Whilst all students have a range of targets to work towards, many of these are vague, lack coherence and are not helpful in the planning of learning. For example, there is confusion between long-term and short-term goals, and too many are not quantifiable, such as 'to further vocational skills'. For some students, there are too many targets that are negative and have an overemphasis on personal behaviour at the expense of positive improvement.

40. The programme offered to day students is not as comprehensive as that offered to residential students. The day is short, and insufficient opportunity is taken to maximise time outside formal lessons. Some students would benefit from more emphasis on the subjects which interest them or where they have strengths. The personal tutorial support is satisfactory. There is good liaison between personal tutors and key workers, and students feel well supported by the staff.

Leadership and management

41. There is satisfactory leadership and management of this curriculum area. There is a commitment among all staff to improving standards and to developing learning opportunities for the students. There are regular planning meetings and communication between staff is good. There has been effective staff training so that challenging behaviours in the classroom are well managed. The staff have regular supervision, which has helped in the implementation of the revised curriculum. The balance between behavioural and other objectives is not yet clear to all staff, and there is not yet an appropriate balance between subject content and behavioural skills. The managers are aware that this needs further development.

Literacy and numeracy

Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (Grade 4)**

Strengths

- good teaching of literacy and numeracy in catering, art and music

- effective integration of literacy and numeracy in catering, art and music.

Weaknesses

- inadequate recording of students' achievements in literacy and numeracy
- inadequate response to students' literacy and numeracy needs
- insufficient expertise in teaching literacy and numeracy
- unsatisfactory initial assessments
- poor co-ordination of literacy and numeracy across the extended curriculum.

Scope of provision

42. The college provides four discrete basic skills lessons a week for students who have literacy and numeracy skills at entry level or above, for other students at pre-entry level, literacy and numeracy are integrated into the lessons. Three of the 13 students on these courses attend twice a week. Four students receive teaching in literacy and numeracy at a local further education college. Staff have linked the criteria in the core curricula for literacy with the corresponding criteria in the 'essential skills' award curriculum. They use the results of this 'mapping' exercise to identify speaking and listening targets for every student across the curriculum. Tutors are required to set learning activities for each lesson to help all students meet these targets. Students attending discrete basic skills provision have a separate literacy and/or numeracy target in their individual learning plans. The inspection included discrete lessons, a lesson at the local college and observations of lessons where students had basic skills targets. Evidence from the observations made by other inspectors on the team contributed to the judgements. Judgements on those lesson observations where literacy and numeracy were integrated relate to the teaching of literacy and numeracy in that session.

Achievement and standards

43. The college has insufficient data on students' rates of achievement. Students' achievements in literacy and numeracy are not adequately assessed or recorded. In some sessions, students were not working towards appropriate standards. Many learning activities were not sufficiently challenging for students. For example, in a discrete literacy and numeracy session, one student using a computer to create a price list had good computing skills. The activity was too easy and did not help him to develop his literacy or numeracy skills. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

Quality of education and training

44. Teachers successfully integrate the teaching of literacy and numeracy in catering, art and music lessons. For example, in one catering lesson, students learned how to estimate specific lengths of time, such as two seconds or 15 minutes, when cooking lunch. The activity was well taught and effectively reinforced at a later stage. However, students on the other areas of learning throughout the college do not make adequate progress in improving their levels of literacy and numeracy. Most observed lessons did not adequately meet students' literacy and numeracy learning needs. The discrete literacy and numeracy lessons were poorly planned. Staff do not use students' learning targets in literacy effectively to plan a learning programme to help students improve their levels of literacy and numeracy. Most learning activities are not sufficiently linked to the students' learning needs. Tutors and support workers miss opportunities to use learning activities to develop students' basic skills. For example, when lessons and evening activities involve students spending money on food items or swimming or cinema tickets, staff do not always use the activity to teach or reinforce the use of money and calculations. Students are not receiving enough guidance to help them achieve the identified listening and speaking targets. For example, one student's targets involved giving more details when answering questions. His lessons did not include the teaching of the language needed to do this.

45. Staff do not have adequate qualifications and levels of expertise to teach literacy and numeracy, and are using the core literacy curriculum without adequate understanding of how to relate the criteria to students' individual learning needs. Most staff are not aware of the guidance, ideas and suggested teaching activities included in the curriculum. Few staff are using an extensive range of learning resources and materials. Some learning materials are not helpful in developing students' literacy. For example, some students are using worksheets and dictionaries in too small print, or software that is not sufficiently adult in presentation or content.

46. Initial assessments of students' literacy and numeracy skills are weak. Staff do not have an accurate picture of students' skills and abilities. This aspect of the curriculum is poorly managed. Initial assessments are not used effectively to plan students' learning programmes or assess their progress. Tutors are not adequately assessing students' learning in literacy and numeracy in lessons. Students receive little feedback on how well they have carried out an activity or whether they have acquired new skills.

47. Staff are currently using the adult core curricula in literacy and numeracy to help identify learning targets linked to the students' needs in life skills. However, the students' learning programmes are inadequate. Learning targets are primarily linked to the listening and speaking criteria in the literacy core curriculum. Most learning programmes do not identify the literacy and numeracy skills students need. Few students' learning plans include the literacy and numeracy skills students need to learn to help them achieve their medium-term and long-term goals. Teaching in catering, music and art is the exception. Staff have successfully combined the learning of these subjects with the learning of relevant literacy and numeracy skills, including the skills required to develop appropriate assessment portfolios for the catering NVQs.

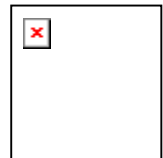
48. Staff have a particularly good understanding of students' behavioural learning targets and take these into account when planning lessons. They manage inappropriate behaviours effectively and help develop students' social and behavioural skills as part of the sessions. Some records of tutorials are scant. Some tutorials are too heavily focused on assessing and setting short-term goals, and are not sufficiently linked to helping students achieve long-term targets by using the initial assessments and baseline assessments. Some students are not receiving appropriate additional resources to support their learning.

Leadership and management

49. The college management has recognised the need to improve literacy and numeracy skills. It has identified staff development needs and arranged for staff to participate in training in the core literacy and numeracy curricula. However, the current provision is inadequately co-ordinated. Staff lack expertise in teaching literacy and numeracy. A basic skills policy was developed in February 2002. However, it does not provide staff with sufficient information and guidance on crucial aspects of teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy, such as the use of rigorous and accurate initial assessments. There are no criteria or performance indicators for monitoring the implementation of

the basic skills policy. Although all students' individual learning plans include listening and speaking learning targets, managers do not effectively monitor the quality of the teaching to help students achieve these targets. Staff teaching and working in the extended curriculum do not share good practice. For example, the strategies used to integrate the teaching of literacy and numeracy successfully in catering, art and music are not used by staff working in other aspects of the provision. Students' achievements are inadequately recorded. There are no data to evaluate effectiveness of the literacy and numeracy provision.

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